

April 2005

## VETERANS MEMORIAL GARDEN BREAKS GROUND IN BALBOA PARK

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Dick Murphy and I launched construction on a Veterans Memorial Garden in Balboa Park, honoring the many generations of San Diego military personnel who have proudly served our country.

The \$1.4 million Veterans Memorial Garden will sit on one acre of land adjacent to the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in the Inspiration Point area of Balboa Park. The memorial will honor all military veterans with three distinct sections: the Land Garden, Air Garden and Sea Garden.



Councilmember Atkins, Mayor Murphy and Park and Recreation Department Director Ellie Oppenheim join local veterans at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Veterans Memorial Garden in Balboa Park.

The three separate places of honor will be united by colored paths of decorative concrete. In the center will be an amphitheater and Veterans' Circle illustrating honor, duty and country. The project will replace rundown tennis courts and access roads. Mature trees now on site will be incorporated into the gardens.

The Veterans Memorial Garden will be the realization of a long-held dream for a focal point in Balboa Park that will both honor our veterans and celebrate San Diego's military heritage. The garden will not only be a fitting tribute to our veterans, but will be a thought-provoking public space as well.

"The Veterans Memorial Garden here in San Diego will ensure that the pride and sacrifices of our military veterans are never forgotten," said Mayor Murphy during the program.

The groundbreaking marks the beginning of construction on Phase I of the project, which is expected to be completed by Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, 2005. The Air Garden will be the first phase of construction. Notable features will include a reflecting pool and a bronze B-24 Liberator bomber airplane replica, scaled to size and donated by the B-24 Bomber Club.

Proposition 40 park bond funds will pay for the first phase of the Veterans Memorial Garden project. I had the opportunity to work with then-Assemblymember Christine Kehoe and Mayor Murphy to secure these funds for Balboa Park. The principle garden design was developed by San Diego-based architectural firm Austin Veum Robbins Partners and David Reed Landscape Architects.

## SAVE THE DATE!! ATKINS TO HOST BUDGET FORUM IN THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT

**Thursday, April 14th**  
**Alice Birney Elementary School Auditorium**  
**7:00pm**

I know that many of you have questions about the city's current financial condition and how it will affect the upcoming budget. On Thursday, April 14th, I will host City Manager Lamont Ewell and representatives of the city's Financial and Management Services staff to discuss and review the Fiscal Year 2006 budget for the City of San Diego. The forum will be held from 7:00 to 9:00pm in the auditorium of Alice Birney Elementary School, 4345 Campus Avenue, in University Heights.

The forum is free and the public is encouraged to attend. For more information, contact my office at 619/236-6633.



Councilmember Atkins delivered her first State of the District Address on March 2nd in the ballroom of the Balboa Park Club.

## MORE THAN 200 HEAR ATKINS DELIVER STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, I delivered my first-ever State of the District Address before more than 200 community members in the ballroom of the Balboa Park Club. This allowed me the opportunity to review some of the more important accomplishments we've achieved together over the past four years and discuss my plans for what I see as the major priorities and issues facing our district and the city in the coming four-year term. It also offered me the perfect opportunity to thank and honor numerous community leaders and activists, city staff members, interns, volunteers, members of the media, and our Youth Commission members for their unique contributions to the many successes we've had during our first term. (A complete list of honorees appears on page 7.) I'd like to share with you an abridged version of the remarks I made that evening.

### A Strong Partnership

The partnership we've formed has made a difference in the successes we've achieved in the Third District. When I was first elected in 2000, we set an ambitious goal. I told you we could hit the ground running and work together to get more done in our district quicker, and we've done that—on public safety, housing, infrastructure needs, redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization. We've expanded our parks and green space, upgraded our public facilities, supported our small businesses and protected our urban canyons.

I promised you that I'd function well as a team player, working with my council colleagues to get things done, and taking an active role in government. Toward this end, I was proud to serve as chair of the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee for two years, and honored to serve as Deputy Mayor in 2004—the first District Three councilmember to hold this position in 15 years. I was also happy to serve as chair of the council committee to select the city's new auditor, giving me an opportunity to help take a proactive step to solve our city's fiscal challenges. Currently, I serve on a committee with Mayor Murphy and Councilmember Scott Peters that will select our next city manager—a manager who will be working under the city's new strong mayor form of government. It is my intent to use my work on this committee to insure that our neighborhood needs are not lost in this transition. I also serve as vice-chair of the newly formed Government Efficiency and Openness Committee, which will give me a forum to advocate for a government that works openly on the public's behalf, and not behind closed doors.

Over 200 people turned out for the address, which included the presentation of awards to various groups of honorees.



### Infrastructure

Infrastructure has been one of my top priorities in office. We created a \$3.7 million loan for infrastructure projects in the district, the first of its kind in the city. We changed the city's trenching policy so that streets are resurfaced curb-to-curb following trenching, and we changed the citywide streetlight policy to provide better lighting citywide, resulting in all the streetlights in the district being converted to brighter, high pressure sodium white lights. We also implemented a residential undergrounding program which allows for \$36.5 million to be collected annually so that all of our overhead lines are placed underground in the next 20 years. This is one of my proudest accomplishments.

Phase I of the 30th Street undergrounding project was just the first of many such projects that will see overhead lines completely undergrounded citywide over the next 20 years.





In 2002 we completed the Mid-City Pipeline, a \$25 million project which replaced the decades-old Trojan Pipeline to increase water efficiency for the entire Mid-City area. We've completed over \$3 million in capital improvement projects in business areas through our district, tried to solve traffic circulation issues in our neighborhoods, and worked to fix sidewalks wherever possible, making our communities more pedestrian friendly.

### **Community Revitalization**

We continue to make community revitalization a top priority, and we've had major successes in this area. The Metro Career Center job training center and adjacent Metro Villas affordable housing project are completed at 39<sup>th</sup> Street and University Avenue in City Heights. The North Park Theatre is poised for a triumphant grand re-opening as a live theatre venue this October, and the project will include an adjacent pedestrian plaza, along with a 400-car public garage.

### **Housing**

In the area of affordable housing, we've made significant gains. In 2001, I gained the support of the City Council to implement the nation's first Housing State of Emergency, with the goal to raise awareness of the housing crisis we face in San Diego. Shortly thereafter, I succeeded in getting the city, our redevelopment agency and the Centre City Development Corporation to issue the city's first-ever housing bond in the amount of \$55 million. This allowed us to have the funds now in order to build the critically needed affordable housing sooner. And we also passed the city's first Inclusionary Housing Policy, with the goal to provide affordable housing in every development citywide and create balanced communities.



The beautiful and welcoming Metro Villas, a multi-family, affordable rental complex adjacent to the Metro Career Center in City Heights, is a perfect example of how to make housing projects accessible for working families.

We've already witnessed the completion of three affordable housing projects in City Heights: Hollywood Palms, Metro Villas and the City Heights Townhomes. At present, we have three major housing developments in the works, each of which are either fully or partially affordable in nature: The Renaissance (30th Street and El Cajon Boulevard) and La Boheme (30th Street and Lincoln Avenue) in North Park, and Talmadge Senior Villages at 52nd Street and El Cajon Boulevard in Talmadge.

### **Balboa Park**

Balboa Park continues to be the jewel of our city and a top priority of mine. We've had great success working with then-Assemblymember Christine Kehoe and then-Governor Gray Davis to locate \$6 million in Proposition 40 park grant moneys to fund projects to build the West Arcade, create a Veterans Memorial Garden, and much-needed repairs to the California Tower, the Museum of Art facade and the Casa del Prado facade. Additionally, the City Council recently approved a \$1 million allocation to fund much-needed repairs to the Aerospace Museum roof.



Funding has been identified for repairs to the California Tower, as well as other projects in Balboa Park.

### **Environment**

On environmental issues, I've been very encouraged to be a part of a City Council that has set policies and procedures that have resulted in a reduction of sewer spills by 72 percent over the past four years. I'm also pleased to report that there has been a 68 percent reduction in beach posting closures since 2000. I was proud to receive an A+ report card grade—the highest given to any councilmember this year—from the San Diego BayKeeper, and am honored to serve as the Speaker of the State Assembly's appointment to the San Diego River Conservancy, where we are working to restore this important waterway from the headwaters east of San Diego to the tidelands of Mission Bay. In addition, I have led the charge at the city to designate our urban canyons as permanent open and park space.

### **Public Safety**

With regard to public safety, we now have a five-year funding plan in place for both police and fire rescue services that has already produced a \$62 million budget increase for police and fire in the current fiscal year. Within the district, we worked with the Park and Recreation and Police departments to identify and fund a new location for our police storefront in North Park at the Adult Center facing out onto North Park Community Park. Safety remains a top priority of mine, and while San Diego still remains one of our nation's safest large cities, we need to remain ever vigilant as we see crime rate numbers begin to inch upward. That is why I will continue to fund additional officers when needed. We added 40 officers last year, and reinstated the police academy annually to get new police officers into our neighborhoods.

With regard to fire safety, the city responded to the tragic Cedar Fire, which resulted in the loss of 1, 577 homes being lost in Scripps Ranch and Tierrasanta, by implementing new fire regulations and a new program called CERT (Community Emergency Response Team). This program is similar to the Neighborhood Watch Program in that it trains communities to work collectively as a neighborhood to help respond in the case of fire emergencies. Additionally, as a member of the SAFE board and as your councilmember, I was pleased to help identify funding to purchase our fire rescue helicopter.

### **Public Facilities In Our Neighborhoods**

One of my ongoing and top priorities is the commitment I've made to ensure that our communities not only receive their fair share of resources to fund our projects, but also that our deficiencies that have been ignored for decades are finally addressed. I believe strongly that an updated, efficient infrastructure and public facilities system in our district will dramatically improve our quality of life. That is why I will continue to fight for our library and park systems in our district.

Under the Libraries Facilities Improvement Plan, passed by the City Council, we are working on three library projects: the district flagship library in North Park, a new library site in Hillcrest to serve the combined Mission Hills and Hillcrest communities, and an expansion of the Kensington Branch Library. In addition, I was able to secure funding for an architectural and engineering study for the Teacher Training Annex Building in University Heights to explore the possibilities of retrofitting this historic building for use as the new University Heights Branch Library.



The Teacher Training Annex is being looked at as a possible new home for the University Heights Branch Library.

With regard to park land and open space, I've heard loud and clear from community groups and its members that urban parks, and the programs and facilities that go with them, need to remain a top priority. I'm pleased to report that we have spent \$13.6 million toward this goal. Over the past four years we have opened four new parks—Park de la Cruz, Teralta Park, 39<sup>th</sup> Street Park and Terrace Drive Park. We have upgraded play areas, installed lighting and improved infrastructure at numerous parks throughout the district, and several more projects are in the pipeline. And we are currently working with the San Diego Unified School District on joint use agreements for four new elementary schools in our district that will result in improved play conditions for students and the broader community to enjoy.

### **The Challenges We Face**

But while there is much that we have accomplished, there is still much to do. We are faced with the daunting task of carrying out our district mission during a time of both major transition with the switch to a strong mayor form of government pending, and great financial struggle, with the ongoing pension crisis and already difficult planned budget reductions.

### **The Transition To Strong Mayor**

First and foremost, I want to stress how important it is for you, as residents of our city, not to turn your backs or be diverted by news-grabbing headlines that detract from our focus on the transition to the strong mayor form of government. We need citizen vigilance to ensure that the transition goes smoothly and the critical details that will affect our day-to-day lives aren't bypassed, overlooked or ignored. Most importantly, we need to ensure that the city keep its promise to provide basic neighborhood services and efficient constituent response when the responsibilities for responding to complaints shifts from the council offices to the mayor's office under the new form of government. It will be critical that we monitor this process to guarantee that citizens' issues are addressed and that the process is designed to promote the public's access and inclusion while still promoting transparency and openness in the process.

### **The Budget**

Our city is facing serious financial challenges. Historically, the city budget has been underfunded for services like maintenance in our parks, library resources, public safety equipment, staffing for the Police Department, roadway improvements, and many other services deemed to be important by the citizens. Deferred maintenance has existed for decades and continues to become more problematic. The city's Blue Ribbon Task Force identified more than a \$2 billion deferred maintenance problem for our city. This is an existing problem, not a new one.

Additionally, with the State budget problems that have resulted in more local money being held back and diverted to the State to close their budget deficit, the city is facing a more difficult situation than it has for some time. Two major issues are before the city and have become intermingled because they have mutual bearing upon each other: the city's financial disclosure practices, and, the under-funding of the pension fund.

### **The Pension Fund**

The Pension Fund situation is serious, complex and must be resolved. We must have a doable plan in place to fully fund the system.

In addition, the city has to undertake a review and investigation into its prior financial disclosure practices due to errors in our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

(CAFR), which is the document that rating agencies like Fitch, Moody's, and Standard and Poors rely upon to determine the city's financial health. It also provides information to the potential investors of any of the bonds the city puts out to market. In the next year, we must ensure, in a going-forward fashion, that we have the most stringent procedures and protections in place as we make the required disclosures so that as a city we can re-establish our good credit with the bond markets. In resolving this problem, I'd like to share with you what has been done to date:

In January of 2004—a little more than a year ago—the city issued voluntary corrections to bond disclosure documents which addressed the problems in the previous disclosures. This action and the corrections took place before the Securities and Exchange Commission began its investigation.

In January of 2004, the Council also hired the first director of the Securities and Exchange Commission's Office of Municipal Securities, Paul Maco, and his law firm of Vinson & Elkins, to investigate what went wrong with the city's disclosures. The 300-page report described how financial practices dating back to the 1980s have put the city in its current fiscal position.

This past September, upon receiving the Vinson & Elkins report, the City Council enacted new disclosure protocols to prevent these mistakes from happening in the future. The tougher, new federal regulations recently adopted for corporations in the Sarbanes-Oxley securities laws do not apply to local governments, but we have become the first municipality to adopt these standards. We believe San Diego may very well be setting a new standard for cities across the nation. That is a good thing for local government.

In October and November, KPMG and the city agreed that there should be an even closer review. That extended review began with Vinson & Elkins working with the City Manager, City Council and the City Attorney to provide a more thorough analysis to ensure KPMG's comfort level in providing the 2003 Audit.

Our new City Attorney was elected in November, took office in December, and is now also engaged in the overall process along with Vinson & Elkins, the Mayor and Council, and KPMG.

About a month ago, the City Council with the support of the Manager and the City Attorney, engaged Mr. Lynn Turner, a former Chief Accountant with the SEC, to review the Vinson & Elkins report for transmission to our hired auditing firm, KPMG.

The City Council, City Attorney and the City Manager continue to cooperate fully with the federal government, even to the extent of waiving the attorney-client privilege

for the period of review and investigation so that our auditors and the federal investigators have access to all the facts in the case. We have asked that the Retirement Board provide a similar waiver.

While 41 percent of the pension under-funding is attributable to employee benefit increases, most of those increases were given in 1998 and 2000. An additional 4 percent of the deficit is attributable to the Council's 2002 vote on benefits.

### **Government Transparency and Openness**

This is one of the most important principles of our government system. As you know, I believe that government is a very public affair and that the more access the citizens have, the better they are served.

That is why as Vice-Chair of the Government Efficiency and Openness Committee, I will closely monitor the actions of the city government to make sure that the public, not the politicians and not the so-called insiders, are given all the information they require. This way there can be no doubt in the public's mind as to what actions we take and why we take them.

I was proud to serve on the Right To Know Committee and place on the ballot Proposition D, the Access to Open Government Initiative. The voters approved this proposition by 85 percent—the highest percentage of any issue voted on in November.

I did not support limiting public comment to one day and more recently I did not support moving public comment to the end of the Council day. We can not marginalize the citizenry this way. This only creates more doubt that your public servants are not working in your best interests.

I pledge to you that as long as I serve as your representative, I will protect your right to access, and will actively participate in your government to ensure that it is convenient and accessible for you and not the politicians.

Funding for infrastructure projects like the Ray Street Streetscape Project, pictured at right, could be made available in all districts through passage of a citywide infrastructure bond.



### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

Over the next four years, I intend to continue the work we have yet to complete on projects throughout the Third Council District. There is still so much to do.

I'm committed to improve the quality of life in all of the communities in our district, and throughout the city. First and foremost, I have proposed that the City Council commit to pass a Citywide Infrastructure Bond Measure.



This measure will need to be an undertaking similar to the Unified School District's Prop MM Campaign to rebuild schools. It is my goal to end the term "deferred maintenance" in our district and in our city.

Key projects for our district under such a measure could include needs as diverse as general, critical street-related improvements to wipe out the estimated \$65 million in deferred maintenance projects in our district; work on Aldine Drive between Kensington and Talmadge; finally getting the entire length of Florida Street repaved; major improvements in Balboa Park; moving forward with the Georgia Street Bridge Capital Project; and getting help financing parking facilities in our urban business core areas.

Second, we need to implement the City of Villages Pilot Village Projects along El Cajon Boulevard in City Heights and North Park.



Focus on future projects will include major challenges like the rebuilding of the Georgia Street Bridge.

Third, we must continue to work to improve our Third District libraries and keep these projects on track.

Fourth, we need to initiate the planning for the Balboa Park Centennial in 2015, and work toward the formation of a Centennial Committee to begin the process. We also need to focus our energies on infrastructure improvements to both the park itself and the National Historic District.

Further, we need to continue our efforts to improve the environment. I will continue to work hard on behalf of the San Diego River Conservancy to purchase parcels of land along the river to protect and enhance it. I am committed to improve and expand our urban parks, including identifying funds to purchase the City Heights parcel and complete the Normal Heights linear park. Improving and protecting our urban canyons will remain a top priority, and toward that end I will continue to champion getting our urban canyons mapped and designated using Environmental Growth Funds.

And lastly, we need to continue to improve public safety. We need to hire more police officers and upgrade our communications system. We need to complete our fire station projects which will repair, expand and rebuild Fire Stations 5 and 17, and continue to support the critically needed new station in Mission Valley which will help our district.

I will join Councilmember Tony Young and the chair of the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, Councilmember Jim Madaffer, to address gang-related issues which continue to negatively impact our Mid-City communities.

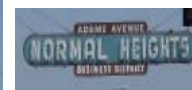
## Working Together To Finish What We've Started

The bottom line here is that we must complete what we've started, and we need to get new initiatives underway to expand on what we've done. We also need to stay focused on the details as we implement the larger vision.

Everything we've accomplished up to this point and everything we set out to do, we do together. This is a turning point—a true watershed moment for our district.

Many of you will remember that a little more than a decade ago, San Diego had written our communities off. We knew it. We felt it. We were ignored. It seemed that the only images we saw of our district in the media were stories about crime-riddled neighborhoods and communities that were passed their prime. That is no longer true.

Today, we know that the Third District is a desired place to live and raise a family, to own a business and be part of one of the most vibrant parts of our city. We are surrounded by the best in freeway access, historically significant communities that boast the craftsman bungalow, the Spanish and Mediterranean-style homes that distinguish us from the newer communities to the north, and a network of urban canyons that provide the most unique green space in the country. All with the diversity of people and cultures living side by side that makes us more interesting than any other place in the City of San Diego.



The idea of the City of Villages was not new to the Third District. We created that vision long ago and only now are the city and region catching on. All of you in the district who have stayed involved in your communities have helped create this model that has received national recognition. It's our time, and it's your time to shine.

Let's take the next four years to make the most of the opportunities in front of us—to raise the quality of life in our district to the next level. We have done a lot in the four short years that I've had the honor to serve you. I know that we can accomplish much more in the next four years.

## ATKINS HONORS COMMUNITY MEMBERS, STAFF, MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERS AT STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

During her State of the District Address, Councilmember Atkins took the time to thank and honor community leaders and activists, city staff members, interns, volunteers, members of the media and city Youth Commissioners, all listed below. At right, Councilmember Atkins joins her community honorees for a group photo.



Special Thanks To:  
**SDG&E and Viejas Enterprises** for underwriting the cost of the awards.  
**Cox Communications** for underwriting the cost of the reception.  
**Bill Tall and City Farmers** for lending us the foliage that adorned the stage.  
**St. Didacus Church** for lending us the coffee urns for the reception.  
**Ron Sperry and RC Awards** for their assistance with the awards.

### Community Honorees

Marco Anguiano	North Park Lions Club
Laurie Burgett	Jackie O'Connor
Deborah Cooper	Betty Peabody
Maria Cortez	Linda Pennington
Ann Ellis	William Perks
Pete Evaristo	Michael Powers
Vicki Granowitz	Alex Sachs
Alan Jaffe	Phyllis Shess
Sandy Johnson	Warren Simon
Samantha Keenan	Al and Barbara
Scott Kessler	Stasukevich
Cindy Lehman	Beth Swersie
Fred Lindahl	Hal Thomas
Sev MacPete	Jay Turner
Nan McGraw	Gary Weber

### City Staff Honorees

Ahmed Aburahmah	April Penera
Nathan Bruner	Geary "Tony" Pollard
Bonnie Contreras	Mike Richmond
Lara Evans	Tom Romstad
Marci Garcia	Mario Sierra
George Loveland	Ellie Oppenheim
Officer Pat Norris	Janet Wood

### Third District Office Intern Honorees

Gerry Grogan	Madeline Paul
Cathy Hemphill	Marisa Smith

### Street Fair Volunteer Honorees

Patrick Ambrosio	Virginia Nash
Bethany Butcher	Bobby Riddick
Barbara BuZard	Cheryl Robinson
Ray Caron	Greg Stark
Gloria Johnson	Bill Steffan
Sybil Jones	Chi Tran
R.J. "Van" Van der Voort	

### Media Honorees

*Gay & Lesbian Times*; Michael Portantino, Publisher

*Hillquest*: Ann Garwood/Nancy Moors, Publishers

*San Diego CityBeat*: David Rolland, Editor; Kelly Davis, Associate Editor; Dan Strumpf, Staff Writer

*San Diego Magazine*: Rachel Laing, Writer

### Youth Commission Honorees

Mariano Diaz	Alexandra Hill	Anne Shirashi
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## How To Contact Us

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## PUBLIC ART GATE DEDICATED IN UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

Rain did not deter me from joining with the University Heights community at a public art dedication ceremony on February 17th. Entitled "Trolley Comes to Town," this art gate, located at the southwest corner of the Park Boulevard and Meade Avenue intersection in University Heights, was designed and fabricated by local artists Alber de Matteis and Linda Joanou. The University Heights Community Development Corporation commissioned the project using funds from the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. San Diego City Schools, the City of San Diego Community and Economic Development Department and the staff at Alice Birney Elementary School were also instrumental in the creation of the art gate.

Over the years, the residents of University Heights have done an amazing job identifying the qualities that make this neighborhood so distinct. The neighborhood has recreated itself by adding many great new restaurants and shops. To have the artists capture the character and pride of this community in their artwork has added even more to the special qualities this neighborhood already has to offer.



Inclement weather forced the ribbon cutting of the "Trolley Comes to Town" art gate project inside the Alice Birney Elementary School auditorium, but didn't dampen the spirits of those on hand.

Made of steel, the gate carries the depiction of an old-time trolley as it arrives into town. The trolley, along with the ostrich, has been a recognizable and beloved symbol for the University Heights neighborhood since the days when the trolley ran through town and the ostrich farm operated at the end of what is now Park Boulevard. Based on input and feedback from members of the community, the artists decided that the image of the trolley best represented what they wanted to convey: a feeling of arrival.

## IMPROVED PLAYGROUND RE-OPENS IN GOLDEN HILL

In early February, I was pleased to help celebrate the grand reopening of the Golden Hill Children's Playground.

The upgraded equipment looks great, with more variety in the play stations and an inviting color scheme and design. The playground is sure to be popular with the children in Golden Hill.

The improvements that we have been able to make here will ensure that all children are able to fully enjoy the playground. These are tangible improvements that will improve the accessibility of the playground for all those who use it.



Councilmember Atkins speaks at the grand opening celebration of the newly remodeled Golden Hill Children's Playground (above), and joins with community representatives and city staff to help cut the ceremonial ribbon (below).



Providing children with a safe and accessible space for recreation is critically important and I am happy that we were able to identify funds to make these improvements.

This playground represents a collaboration between community and city that has resulted in a project that we can all be proud of. I want to thank the members of the Golden Hill Recreation Council for participating in the design process and for hosting the grand opening event.